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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001487

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [BL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: AMBASSADOR RETURNS; ATTACKS RESUME

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Two hours after the Ambassador landed in La Paz July 2, Minister of Government Rada held a news conference stating his hope that the Ambassador is returning to resume a "diplomatic role" and avoid "political activism." Rada accused the Ambassador of only returning to reunite a fractured opposition, citing a meeting between Embassy officials and Beni opposition Prefect (Governor) Ernesto Suarez the previous day as evidence. In Rada's public accusation, he was correct that PolCouns met Suarez but fabricated that after the meeting Embassy officials went on to meet with Unidad Nacional (UN) party national opposition leader Samuel Doria Medina, who according to a UN spokesman was actually on travel abroad. Rada's statements reveal that Prefect Suarez was being followed and that our staff was surveilled after meeting the Prefect. End Summary.

Rada Continues Role as Lead Attack Dog
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12. (U) Upon the Ambassador's return July 2, Minister of Government Alfredo Rada wasted no time giving a press conference accusing Ambassador Goldberg of only returning to Bolivia to try to reunite a fractured opposition. Rada said he "hoped that (Ambassador Goldberg) isn't returning again to perform political activism. I hope he's coming to assume the diplomatic role that is in his purview." Rada requested that Ambassador Goldberg not "reunite the opposition" or engage in a political role in the August 10 recall referendum where many opposition prefects could potentially be voted out.

13. (U) Rada went on to try to substantiate his accusations of Embassy plotting with the opposition by accusing Embassy officials of meeting with opposition Prefect Suarez (Beni) in a restaurant near the Embassy on the eve of the Ambassador's arrival and declaring that following that meeting the Embassy officials went on to meet UN leader Samuel Doria Medina. UN's spokesman publicly denied such a meeting had occurred, noting that Doria Medina was traveling abroad.

14. (C) Polcouns and others did in fact meet with Suarez July 1 as Suarez was in town to renew his visa to travel to the United States. However, we did not go on to meet Doria Medina but did drive by his house on the way home. We have reason to believe that police intelligence (under Rada's command) were following Suarez, spotted us meeting with him, and then surveilled us after we left. Suarez, who came in

for his visa July 3 and met with the Ambassador, was dismayed by Rada's accusation and admission that he is tracking him.

¶5. (C) On July 3, Econoff (who was at the Suarez meeting) met with a PODEMOS opposition Congresswoman and observed two individuals have lunching at the same restaurant watching their table, and the individuals even took a picture of them using a flash camera. The two left before Econoff and the Congresswoman finished their meeting.

Comment

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¶6. (C) The government wasted no time in resuming personal attacks on the Ambassador but Rada went a step further in essentially revealing that the Prefect and we were being surveilled. We have assumed for some time that the government could be surveilling Embassy staff to try to concoct evidence that we are "conspiring" with the opposition. Rada's latest amateurish attempt puts us on further notice and we have advised staff to be mindful of whom they meet and under what circumstances. That said, we will continue meeting key opposition contacts while being conscious that as with the incident last fall where the Ambassador was accused of plotting with a Colombian paramilitary/criminal because of photo at a public event, Evo's government will fabricate accusations to "substantiate" the perception that the U.S. is out to get him. Incidentally, we learned this week that the Colombian in the photo, who had no prior record, was released as there was no case against him. We plan to protest the government's hostile surveillance of us but as with the prior incidents involving military intelligence and our office in Santa Cruz, we expect no satisfactory response from the government. Rada's welcome home message for the Ambassador bodes ill for our efforts to try to get Evo to correct course.
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